

THE KOLPING CANADA NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS 2012

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE PRAESES OF KOLPING CANADA

Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed, a short while ago, a year of renewal in the Christian faith. It is intended for the time beginning Oct. 11th, 2012 and lasting until November 24th, 2013. What will be expected is a review of your relationship with God: Make room for prayer and attend daily mass; most of you are retired.

In advanced age you appreciate what you learned in younger years about living in a Christian community. Not only if you are an ordained priest or professed religious brother or sister, but also as a dedicated married or single person, in a Christian and Catholic lifestyle. So I am thankful that I am being taken into the setting of an old age home of the Precious Blood Sisters, a community of European background, which has spread out to North America, Africa and the East Asian Continent; the novitiate of the Sisters is here, in Toronto, at St. Benedict's. It is really uplifting to see and hear the young and older sisters singing together with the lay people who come from outside on a daily basis to attend our masses. I look forward to Christmas. It will certainly be uplifting to see us priests concelebrating at the altar and the sisters distributing Holy Communion to the 40 patients. (I will also be at St. Patrick's in Toronto.)

I wish all of you in the Canadian Kolping Society a merry Christmas and a happy new year. The best, and most appropriate Christmas gift you could give me would be that you would find a replacement for me, your National Praeses. I became more and more feeble during the last year, and I would be glad to step aside. It is my hope that you members will plan for your future in this way.

I thank you all for the cooperation you offered me over all the many bygone years.

Treu Kolping - Father Karl Hoeppe, C.Ss.R

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

"Happiness is a delicate and frail flower, and unless we store it in our hearts, our clumsy hands will soon crush it."- A. Kolping

Once again it is time to say thank you to our volunteers who all do a very good job for Kolping Canada. Fr. Hoeppe was there us for many years, but he now wants to retire; may God grant him good health and happiness for the rest of his years. Inge Baumstark in Edmonton who looks after our money and books, Sibylle Ganguin in Vancouver who takes care of our national archives in her usual careful and conscientious way, and Regina Knoll, our editor in Winnipeg. Thank you also to all of our local presidents and all of their executives, also to the people who write the reports for our newsletter, and to the various Presides in our societies. I realize that we would all like to retire, like Father Hoeppe, but I think

that we'd have a hard time replacing everyone.

Could I ask each president to try to come up with a name for a replacement for Father Hoeppe?

We are in a care-taking stage in Kolping Canada, and I think we could all afford to help out other less fortunate people in the Kolping movement. God sent Father Kolping into the world to help people and we are here to carry on the work he started.

Let's not forget the special project for next year, the 200th anniversary of the birth of Father Kolping.

Often when we lose hope and think that this is the end, God smiles from above and says: 'Relax' it's just a bend in the road of life, not the end'.

Have a blessed Christmas season, full of love and peace.

Treu Kolping - Steve Salb

NEWS FROM KOLPING EDMONTON

We began our monthly meetings in Sept. Thankfully; our attendance is still excellent despite dark evenings, icy roads and an "aging gracefully" membership!

In Oct. we held our annual fundraiser dinner. Many volunteers worked to make it an enjoyable evening with another fabulous meal prepared by long-standing Kolping member, Otto Holzbauer.

It has been a frosty Nov. with lots of snow as we lead into our Advent celebration next week. Fr. Neumann will again prepare a program in which we all participate.

As this Christmas season begins, we wish all of you Peace, Love, Joy and Hope as you celebrate with family and friends.

Treu Kolping, Donna Novak

NEWS FROM KOLPING HAMILTON

In November our ladies participated in a Craft Sale at a local Senior Centre. Unfortunately the demand for knitted goods seems to be waning, however, fortunately, a few home baked Christmas Stollen made by Irma Lanznaster, one of our members, were sold immediately - something to remember for next year's sale!

On December 1/12 we held our annual Christmas Party and at the same time we had our General Meeting with all Executives remaining the same.

On December 9/12, we will also assist at our Parish Christmas Party.

No further meetings will be scheduled till May/13 except for the usual bi-monthly Ladies craft group meetings.

In closing we wish everyone a Blessed Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year,

Treu Kolping - Win Klaas

NEWS FROM KELOWNA

To all our Kolping brothers and sisters: May your heart be lifted in praise this Christmas for the wonderful gift of Jesus and the joy He brings to our lives.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a Blessed New Year! Treu Kolping - Gisela Howald

NEWS FROM KOLPING TORONTO

Christmas and New Years Greeting from Toronto We are only weeks away from Christmas. Our Kolping Christmas Party is Dec. 9th. We are now doing it immediately after the 10 a.m. Mass. We will have a self-serve Brunch, with wine, followed by our usual celebration with readings and Christmas songs in both German and English. Finally coffee and cake tops it up. Unfortunately our Praeses, Father Mark Miller, will be unable to attend, but Father Santo and Father Hoeppe will do so.

On a personal note, Christmas is still a big family event at our house. Weeks ago there was all this chatter about where we will celebrate Christmas Eve. Mia and I have three children - Carol, Norman and Rodney. Rodney and his wife Laura have three children, Sophia 2, Aydan 4 and Ava 6. As you can imagine, they are the centre of all the activities. On the other hand Norman and his wife Michelle have two children, Summer 18 and Dylan 21. The word is out that Michelle and Norm want us all to come to Woodbridge to their house. There is however another wrinkle, she will be inviting her parents, her brother and wife and child. There are some raised eyebrows, the first time 'other' people are at our family event. So it will not be totally the family, and with summer and Dylan bringing boy and girl friends, it takes on different dimensions. When it was at mom and dads, it was always just our family, now it comes with a different flavour.

It is nice that the children are making it easier for Mia, although I am sure she will contribute her special cooking skills. In the past when Carol (not married) would have it at her house in downtown Toronto, the boys worried: 'what is she going to cook?'. Carol is a very good cook and is never just happy with the familiar dishes; hers are exotic, of endless variety and plentiful. The boys would rather go to mom and dad and have Turkey, with Spaetzle, Rotkohl, veggies etc. Of course when Christmas Eve is at Laura and Rodney it will take on an Italian flavour. Everybody likes Italian food, no problem.

Another new question is, with other people joining us, whom do we give presents to? After all there are 7 more people at Our Party, which once consisted only family only. Adjustments, adjustments! I notice though that everybody is slowly coming to grips with this new situation and answers are falling into place, and I am sure, come Christmas Eve, everybody will be in a great mood and

master the new situation. The church situation has not been fully cleared either: are we going in the evening or on Christmas morning?.

Isn't it wonderful to have the kids take on and continue the tradition we brought to this country? Christmas day will be quiet for us, we may even go to the cottage, which Mia also decorated for Christmas a few weeks ago already.

To all of you, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and Treu Kolping!
Henry Buss

NEWS FROM VANCOUVER

Where has the time gone? That's the question we ask ourselves as we once again find ourselves in the Season of Advent.

Since our last report, we have had two functions here in Vancouver. On October 28th, we observed the Kolping World Day of Prayer by celebrating Mass with Father James Kairu, filling in for the vacationing Father Boniface. Father James, who comes from Kenya, joined us at the luncheon and told us that he is familiar with the work of the Kolping Society there. The focus of this year's World Day of Prayer was on the Kolping Society of Indonesia, where Catholics are a mere 3% among a mostly Muslim population. This country, made up of over 13,000 islands, with a population of 259,000,000, faces serious challenges. Father Herman May, a German priest, was the driving force in the founding of the first two Kolping Families, leading to the establishment of the Kolping Society of Indonesia in 2006. They need our prayers and solidarity. – Gustavo Romero gave us an update on the project in Jucuaran, El Salvador. It's encouraging to hear that the Internet Café is running smoothly, as well as the café, which is now offering a pastry-baking course and employs four young people. Thank you to hosts Erika Fahrman, Elisabeth Lange and their helpers for organizing the food. All enjoyed the wieners and potato salad.

On December 2nd we observed our traditional Kolping Memorial Day, with Mass celebrated by Father Boniface. On this most solemn celebration of the year for Kolping members worldwide, we are reminded of our mission to carry on the work of Adolph Kolping. Günther filled in for our president Horst who could not attend due to his commitments with the multi-choir benefit concert for the German-Canadian Benevolent Home. As several of our members also sing/play in the different choirs involved, we had to rush the meeting a bit. After the lunch, hosted by Sigi Araszewski and Resi Knoll, we joined in praying for the canonization of our founder, as well, we remembered all of our Kolping brothers and sisters who had gone before us. As this occasion usually coincides with the first Sunday of Advent, we always look forward to the reflective Advent celebration. Sitting at candle-lit, festively decorated tables (thank you, Heidi), we listened to Advent readings by Christian and Günther and were reminded of the true meaning of Advent and Christmas. The meeting ended with the singing of the old favourite "Leise rieselt der Schnee" and the Kolping Song.

Sadly, we lost a long-time member on October 16th. Herbert Pauw lost his battle with devastating cancer just 6 weeks before his 80th Birthday. He had been our treasurer in the early years and a driving force back in the days when our strapping young male members had formed their own Kolping Soccer Team. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Heli and her family.

On behalf of Kolping Vancouver, may the joy, peace and blessings of the Christ Child be with you all!

Rose Vetter

Christmas Thoughts

It's sharing your gifts, not purchasing gifts.

It's not wrapping presents, it's being present
And wrapping your arms around the ones you love.

It's not getting Christmas cards out on time,

It's sending any card, anytime, at the right time.

It's not having the biggest and best Christmas light display,

It's displaying the Christ light that comes from your heart.

It's not Santa coming down the chimney,

It's Jesus coming down from heaven

And giving us the gift of eternal life.

...Anonymous

My Most Unforgettable Christmas

By Rose Vetter

Every year, in the weeks leading up to Christmas, as I prepare to celebrate Christmas with my family, and the irresistible aroma of mixed spices wafts through our house, I'm reminded of the best honey cookies I ever tasted. It was December 1944 and World War II was in its last throes.

In October, as the Russian Front was approaching, the German Military was in retreat from its occupied territories in Yugoslavia and issued orders for all ethnic Germans to evacuate their homes and join the refugee transports. We lived in the once beautiful city of Neusatz (Novi-Sad) on the Danube, founded by Empress Maria Theresa. In September our home was totally destroyed by Allied Bombers. Shortly after that my father was among the last able-bodied men to be conscripted into the German Army. My grandparents, as well as many village people, refused to leave

their home and animals, secure in the belief they would not be harmed, as they had always lived in peaceful coexistence with their Serbian neighbours. Sadly, less than two months later, Marshal Tito's ragtag Communist Partisans dragged them out of their homes at gunpoint and threw them into dismal camps where they died a miserable death. My mother did not hesitate for a moment and packed our suitcases. The three of us, my mother, my sister and I boarded the crowded refugee train, which took us in a northwesterly direction, away from the threatening Russian Front. It was a dangerous journey; we had to leave the train a couple of times and hide in the sparsely canopied forests while being peppered by machine gun fire from Allied dive-bombers. When we finally arrived in Germany, it felt like a homecoming of sorts, after all, we were in the land of our ancestors! We were taken to the village of Ammern in Thüringen, where the billeting of the refugees in private homes was quite efficient, but we soon found out we were not welcome! Someone had spread a rumour that a group of gypsies was arriving in the village! We were given a small room in the home of a lady who treated us very rudely; she was upset because she had to give up one of her rooms. When she saw we were fair-skinned and spoke German, she was puzzled, but despite my mother's assurance that we were German, she was still very hostile towards us. My sister remembers that my mother had to sweep the floor of our room with a little clothes brush because the lady refused to lend us a broom

Nevertheless, my mother kept a brave front and set to work preparing for Christmas. I will never forget how thrilled I was about my Christmas gift: it was a toy crocodile handcrafted by a villager out of pieces of wood connected by leather straps, so that when you moved it, it realistically wiggled from side to side. Mom managed to buy all the ingredients for honey cookies, except there was no honey available in wartime Germany, only an ersatz (substitute) made out of potatoes. However, they were the best honey cookies I ever tasted. Mom kept on baking honey cookies in Canada every year until she died, but none every tasted as good as the ones on that Christmas in Ammern. Could the difference have been the ersatz honey, or was it just because we were hungry?

Years later, when I had children of my own, I came to appreciate how brave and stoic my mother, and millions of war mothers, had been during those devastating years. After all the months of trauma, losing our home, not knowing whether my father was alive or dead, and being unwelcome in a strange place, it seemed on that Christmas Eve that all the heartbreak and emotion finally came crashing down on my mother, for she dissolved into bitter tears. Since those hopeless times, we have celebrated many happy

Christmases with our family, but that was one Christmas I shall never forget.

NEWS FROM KOLPING WINNIPEG

We have been busy with our Corporate Communion Breakfasts followed

by meetings, and our Schlachtfest. All were successful, and we thank everyone who helped make the latter the most profitable ever. George and Barbara Broder were the convenors. Once again, the afternoon cooking crew had a great time; everyone knows what to do and does it cheerfully. In fact, we often laugh like crazy in the kitchen. By the end of the evening, of course, after more than 12 hours, things slow down considerably. The band is so good that people don't want to go home, but several of us sit slumped in our chairs groaning. One of these days we'll have to stop, it's just so hard. And it will be a sad day not just for Kolping Winnipeg, but for the German community here as well. At this moment the German Choir of Winnipeg, a sub-group of the German Society of Wpg., is also in limbo. (About a dozen Kolping members belong to it, and are among the most faithful and committed singers.) The choir director and accompanists have announced their retirement, which may mean the end for the choir, after more than half a century. (Perhaps another of the reasons is that we have at least one member who was there at the very beginning...we have singers who are over 80. Still, many, especially the men, still sing quite beautifully.)

On the 4th of December, we held our Advent celebration. We watched a couple of films - one that was 20 years old - of our Folklorama Alpen Singers and another about Christmas in Germany. Just beautiful. Everyone lasted more than an hour longer than usual!

Margret Littau visited her sisters in Germany in October, she took with her a box of used stamps for Kolping International. Did you know that 35 kg of used stamps bring in about 250 Euros? That is just the amount of money it takes for one young person to finish his or her training course with Kolping International in some part of the world. Keep saving your stamps, people, and send them to Cologne!

Our Archbishop, James Weissgerber, will celebrate Christmas Mass with us this year. He is retiring, and this will be the last time he says a German Mass. He has been supportive of our dwindling community of German parishioners, and we will show our thanks with a gift of German Christmas goodies. We wish him peace and joy in his retirement.

In the past year, we took on 4 new members (the latest was Stephan Baumstark, initiated at our last Communion Breakfast). Our functions are still well attended. Sadly, we lost Hubert Fahnenschmidt last month, after many years of health problems. Our Praeses is now in Brandon, in a larger parish with a school; this is his calling, he is wonderful with young people. He is, in fact, in charge of vocations for our diocese. We will never forget him.

Our new Pastor, Father 'Bo', is, as predicted, is already including German phrases in the Masses. If you could see the pitiful number of parishioners at our German Mass you would be amazed that we still have one. They are less and less all the time.

Our AGM will be held in early January. This year, all executive members' positions are up for grabs. So, if you don't hear from us in the Spring, you'll know what happened...

We wish all Kolping members, their families and friends a wonderful, peaceful and holy Christmas. And a good Rutsch into the new year!
Treu Kolping - rk

(PS: re Henry Buss' article on his family's Christmas: a sign of the times...all but one of our five grandsons will be spending their Christmas with Mom, and then, again, with Dad.

For the next issue of our Messenger we hope to have our regular reporter, Hans Kessling, back. He and Hilde have been gallivanting all over the world, again. They just got back from their latest trek, this time to the Middle East. They made all of their reservations, even cars rentals, on the Internet at home. They are fond of travelling this way, often with just a Rucksack each, and have been doing it for some years; and nothing bad has ever happened to them! Joe and I have been on several guided tours to that area, and even with armed tour guides we were not completely at ease, nor were our guides. In all of the Middle East countries the police all carry rifles slung over their shoulders, and will un-sling them at the drop of a hat.

Our Israeli tour driver and tour guide took us for an unscheduled spin through the Golan Heights. They pointed out a Syrian jeep patrolling the perimeter...and then exchanged friendly waves with the driver. The locals are so used to daily strife, that no one gets terribly upset anymore unless it's a family member who is hurt or killed. What people all over the world don't realize is that Israel receives constant rocket barrages, every day, 8,000 in the past 12 years alone. Eight thousand! You can't help but admire their courage and spirit, and what they have made out of pure desert. Their neighbours, who, in turn, have developed a talent for throwing stones and for taking their little sons with them to riots, must hate that most of all. Turkey is where St. Paul once travelled and preached. It was once part of Greece, and has as many ruins, some even more impressive. Then there's Ephesus, the Blue Mosque, that great market, the museums, and on and on. Turkey's stature in the world is always underestimated. The climate and cities are very much like that of my own home country, the same trees, same soft air. Outside, in the countryside, it is another story; there are things out there that hardly seem of this earth. 'Petra', in Jordan, is surely one of the most stunning sites in the world. In our hotel in Amman we mingled in the lobby with royalty at the wedding of a brother of the king. None of the ladies were veiled; they wore beautiful European clothing, the latest fashions, and what jewels! Egypt is exactly what you might imagine it to be: incredible. To see the beautiful artifacts, to visit the pyramids and that amazing museum is unforgettable. (Users, look up Abu Simbel, or Aswan or Luxor, or the Temple of Isis!) We were flown from Aswan to Abu Simbel, the temple of Ramses II, because it was too dangerous to drive through that stretch of desert. Everything, even stinky camels, are transported by air. We spent a week on a ship on the Nile, saw distant pyramids, oxen, feluccas, cobras and real belly dancers.

All the places where Jesus lived, taught and performed miracles are shrines, run by nuns or other Christian groups. (60% of the population in Bethlehem works in tourism.) They are all over-run by people of all religions and nationalities. Sadly, the spot in Bethlehem (the Church of the Nativity on the West Bank), where they say Jesus was born is probably the worst case of kitsch ever seen on this earth: old, worn-down marble, ancient red brocade draperies, satin, lace, plastic flowers, badly wired red Christmas lights... Outside, idle Palestinians mill around on the street. The city is under Israeli control.

In spite of all the many negative things, you come away from the Holy Land with new faith. It is all suddenly, finally real! I wish everyone could go. Every Christian should. - rk

Attention all reporters and contributors to the KCNL: beginning next year, we will publish just twice a year, just before Easter, and at the end of November, our Christmas issue.

The Spring issue this year will mean that you need to send your report in by March 23rd.

Please keep track of your events; our memories are not what they used to be. (Well, mine isn't.) Thank you all again for your reports, you're all great and have never let me down. Special thank you to Steve Salb, without whom there would probably be no more Kolping in Canada.

Merry Christmas! Regina